

**THE INSTITUTION'S KNOWLEDGE: CONGRESSIONAL STAFF
TURNOVER AND COMMITTEE PRODUCTIVITY**

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ABSTRACT

Emily M. Cottle: The Institution's Knowledge: Congressional Staff
Turnover and Committee Productivity
(Under the direction of Jason M. Roberts)

The impact of congressional staff on legislative productivity is a topic that has only recently attracted scholarly attention. Little attention has been paid, however, to committee staff and committee legislative effectiveness. In this paper I explore the link between United States Senate committees' level of productivity and the experience of their staff. Using a unique dataset of Senate staff experience and a new measure of committee productivity I find that a committee's total staff years of experience is significant in predicting committee legislative effectiveness. I find, however, that greater levels of staff experience only increase committee effectiveness when assessing the experience of *senior* staff. As junior-staff experience increases, however, committees become less effective. These findings suggest that when making hiring decisions, Senate chairs and ranking members should prioritize years of experience in their senior staff while foregoing experienced junior staff in order to achieve greater levels of committee productivity.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“A United States Senator is a constitutional impediment to the smooth functioning of staff.”

– Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa)

The sudden disarray following a general election results in a palpable sense of uncertainty on Capitol Hill. Members who barely secured reelection breathe a sigh of relief, while others face the harsh reality that they will soon be out of a job. Some of these outgoing members have served for decades, yet must come to terms with the fact that the job they thought they would hold for the next two or six years is coming to an end in just over two months. This biennial shift in the congressional composition results in a new reality not only for those members leaving Congress, but also for those continuing to serve. As senior members — particularly committee chairs and ranking members — end their time in Congress, whether voluntarily or not, returning members are tasked with filling new roles and assuming new responsibilities.

In both the House and the Senate, some of the first resolutions introduced at the start of a new Congress are those specifying the members tasked with leading each chamber’s standing committees. These newly selected chairmen assume the responsibility of setting the committee’s agenda, scheduling meetings and hearings, appointing subcommittee chairmen, influencing subcommittee agendas, and serving as a spokesperson on the committee’s agenda to the party and chamber (Deering and Smith 1997). One person, however, can hardly handle all of these responsibilities alone. A key step in setting up one’s committee, therefore — and often the first step in which a new chair engages — is hiring his committee’s staff.

Committee staff are responsible for both the administrative tasks of simply turning on the lights — and knowing which Capitol Hill office to call when the lights do not turn on — to the legislatively intricate tasks of navigating the bill-drafting process — and knowing which lawyer in the legislative counsel’s office is best suited to aid in the actual formatting of a bill. It is not unreasonable to

assert, therefore, that staff have an indispensable role in a committee's day-to-day functioning. Furthermore, I suggest that those staff members with more experience working on a given committee are capable of doing a better job at fulfilling these responsibilities. For this reason, I argue that turnover in committee staff, and, therefore, levels of total staff experience, has a substantial impact on the effectiveness of congressional committees.

In this paper I demonstrate the value of congressional staff — namely Senate committee staff — and the effect of staff experience on legislative effectiveness. Using a new measure to quantify committee legislative effectiveness and a unique dataset of Senate committee staff experience, I find that the experience of a committee's staff *does* have a significant effect on that committee's legislative effectiveness. The effect of this experience, however, depends on whether the experience lies with junior or senior staff. Unsurprisingly, I find that more experienced senior staff is positively correlated with higher levels of committee effectiveness, yet experienced junior staff *decrease* their committee's effectiveness. With my new measure of committee effectiveness I am able to demonstrate that committees with more experienced senior staff are more legislatively effective, while committees that employ more experienced junior staff are less productive. These findings have substantial practical implications for newly installed chairmen seeking to lead highly productive committees: committee chairs seeking greater levels of legislative effectiveness would do well to spend their limited staffing budget on senior staff with experience relevant to that committee while saving funds hiring less experienced junior staff and training them on the job.

CHAPTER 2

COMMITTEE CHAIRS AS EMPLOYERS

Typically the member of the majority party with the greatest seniority on a given committee serves as chair and the most senior member of the minority serves as the ranking member. This practice, however, is complicated by party rules surrounding the selection and tenure of chairmen. In both the House of Representatives¹ and the Senate,² for example, party rules limit Republican members of Congress to serve as chair for a maximum of three terms, resulting in a change in leadership if the current chair reaches this limit. When a chair has reached her term limit leading a committee — or in the case of a change in the majority of the chamber — she will be replaced by the majority party's newly selected chair. This change in committee leadership — no matter if caused by a term-limited chair, a chair failing to secure reelection, or a congressional election resulting in a new majority party — is immediately followed by a change in committee staff.

As Fox and Hammond articulate, "The job of a congressional aide, whether on a personal or committee staff, is a peculiarly personal one — based on mutual trust, confidence, and loyalty to a member" (Fox and Hammond 1977, 3). Due to this inherently personal relationship between a chair and her staff, it is entirely within a committee chair's prerogative to replace existing staff with those she finds more loyal to her. As a new chairman takes the helm of a committee, therefore, experienced staff find themselves interviewing for a position they might have previously held for decades. Furthermore, this change in committee leadership results not only in a change in personnel, but often comes with a sizeable shakeup in the staff's total level of experience as senior staff — the individuals who worked most closely with the previous chairman — are replaced with new staff especially loyal to the incoming chair.

¹"Conference Rules of the 116th Congress," *House GOP*. <https://www.gop.gov/conference-rules-of-the-116th-congress/>.

²"History, Rules & Precedents of the Senate Republican Conference," *Senate Republican Conference*. <https://www.republican.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/about-src>.

Newly elected chairs will often announce their selections for senior staff in one of their first public acts of their chairmanship. On January 31, 2013 — just one week after he was formally appointed chair — Sen. Tom Carper (D-Del.) announced the individuals he selected to serve as his Staff Director, Deputy Staff Director, Chief Counsel, and Communications Director of the Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee.³ Similarly, it was reported only six days following his formal selection as chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee that Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.) had selected as his new staff director and deputy staff director.⁴ These prompt selections of senior staff are not unusual, and are, in fact quite strategic.

To run a successful committee, a chair must entrust a great deal of authority to her staff — especially her senior staff. Once a chairman hires her staff director, and perhaps a handful of other key positions, she typically bestows further hiring decisions on the staff director, often while retaining the ability to serve as a final stamp of approval on the staff director’s recommended hires. Faced with a fixed budget with which to hire staff and few limitations on how to divide the staff’s salaries, the chair and staff director are left with a careful needle to thread deciding which few experienced — yet more expensive — senior staff to retain, and which inexperienced — yet less costly — junior staff to hire. While one chairman might prioritize hiring staff who have experience working on her particular committee, another might choose to hire more junior staff she will need to train, yet in whom she can instill her preferred policy ideals. In either case, the new chair must contend with a fixed staffing budget and make tradeoffs between retaining the experienced staff who will consume more of her budget, or bringing on inexperienced staff who she can likely compensate less. In this paper I demonstrate that the optimal strategy for chairmen making hiring decisions is to retain senior staff with greater levels of experience while bringing on less experienced junior staff. I show that years of experience are more valuable at the senior level than junior level, and chairmen should, therefore, allocate more of their budget to ensure the retention of these experienced senior staff while foregoing more experienced junior staff.

³“Senator Carper Announces Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Staffing Changes,” January 31, 2013. <https://www.carper.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/pressreleases?ID=3FFF6C99-BF30-474F-B852-46DF78020E12>.

⁴Josh Rogin, “New House Foreign Affairs Committee takes shape,” *Foreign Policy*, January 9, 2013. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/01/09/new-house-foreign-affairs-committee-takes-shape/>.

CHAPTER 3

STAFF EXPERIENCE

Congressional staff have long been called the “invisible force” behind members of Congress (Fox and Hammond 1977). Others have been more blunt in their assessment of staff’s role calling congressional aides “unelected lawmakers” (Malbin 1980). However one chooses to define this class of political aides, few dispute their importance. Political scientists have long sought to understand the role that congressional staff play in the lawmaking process, addressing foundational questions of who these staff are (Kammerer 1951; Patterson 1970; Fox and Hammond 1977; Salisbury and Shepsle 1981), what experience they have (Romzek and Utter 1997; Leal and Hess 2004; Cain and Drutman 2014), and what responsibilities they hold (Kofmehl 1962; DeGregorio 1994; Curry 2015), to more nuanced assessments of a staffer’s responsiveness to her boss’ positions (DeGregorio 1988), responsiveness to constituents’ positions (Hertel-Fernandez, Mildemberger and Stokes 2019), the accountability of congressional staff (Romzek 2000), and the strength and effect of staff networks (Rich March 20, 1977; Montgomery and Nyhan 2017; McCrain 2018; Burgat 2020). Few studies, however, have focused on the role of committee staff, and even fewer on the effect of these specialized staff on a given committee’s productivity.

Over the past ten years, the size of the congressional workforce has hovered at around 15,000 staff (Petersen and Wilhelm 2016; Petersen 2016). Approximately 1/6 of these staffers, however, are not employed by a member of Congress directly, rather they serve as committee staff.¹ Congressional committees are staffed by anywhere from 20 to 200 total majority and minority staff who serve at the pleasure of the chairman and ranking member, respectively.

Unlike personal-office staff who are tasked with developing a cursory level of expertise on a broad swath of legislative topics, committee staff are hired because of their expertise on a specific policy area within the committee’s jurisdiction. Within this area of expertise, committee staff serve

¹Data on congressional staff was obtained from LegiStorm and will be explained in more detail in subsequent sections.

three primary functions for the chair or ranking member: they protect their boss from surprises and attacks, provide factual information on the substance of relevant legislation, and report on the political forecasts of proposed or pending legislation (DeGregorio 1994; Patterson 1970). The success of committee staff in accomplishing these key responsibilities depends largely on their previous experience in this role. Only a handful of scholars, however, have argued that continuity of a committee’s staff has any determination on the committee’s success (Kofmehl 1962; Patterson 1970; Romzek and Utter 1997).

Continuity of staff, from the perspective of sheer numbers, is relatively well documented. The size of committee staffs has fluctuated substantially since the Legislative Reorganization Act of 1946 first authorized committees to hire professional staff (Kammerer 1951), growing steadily through the 1970s and 1980s (Malbin 1980) until being trimmed back again in the 1990s (Ornstein, Malbin and Mann 2002). In the past ten years, however, Senate committee staffs, in particular, have been growing, reaching a peak in the 113th Congress and remaining relatively constant in the congresses since.² As mentioned previously, however, even if the overall size of these staffs has remained relatively constant in recent congresses, the makeup of the staff varies substantially — especially when a committee is taken over by a new chair.

New chairmen typically take the helm of a committee for one of three reasons: 1) the previous chair retired or lost her race, 2) the previous chair was term-limited out of her position, or 3) the party controlling the majority of the chamber flipped, resulting in a new chair from the newly installed majority party. In any of these cases, however, staff are vulnerable to being replaced. From any given Congress to the next, the average percentage of committee staff returning to serve on that same committee in the subsequent Congress is about 75 percent. As existing research suggests, however, committees that are staffed by more experienced staff are better equipped to accomplish the key legislative responsibilities of committees. For this reason, I anticipate that those committees with higher levels of staff experience will be more successful in accomplishing legislative goals. Just as members of Congress improve their legislative effectiveness as their tenure increases (Volden and Wiseman 2014), I argue that staff tenures have a similar effect on legislative effectiveness.

²See Appendix A for full staff counts by committee and Congress.

CHAPTER 4

COMMITTEE STAFF TENURE AND LEGISLATIVE EFFECTIVENESS

As Speaker Sam Rayburn analogized frequently, “Any jackass can kick a barn door down, but it takes a carpenter to build it back.”¹ Rayburn’s infamous quip suggests that he believed there to be particular qualities that make some individuals better suited to certain jobs than others. More specifically, he insinuated that some members of Congress possess skills that make them more effective lawmakers than others. Measuring this effectiveness quantitatively, however, is a task that scholars have only taken on recently.

The primary method by which scholars understand individual members of Congress’ legislative productivity and success is through Craig Volden and Alan Wiseman’s legislative effectiveness scores (2014). In their book, *Legislative Effectiveness in the United States Congress*, Volden and Wiseman make the case that, “Representation in U.S. legislative politics depends crucially on the ability of elected representatives to take the issues that are important to their constituents and translate them into public policy” (Volden and Wiseman 2014, 18). This understanding of legislative effectiveness is, of course, consistent with David Mayhew’s discussion of members’ position taking and credit claiming to secure electoral security (Mayhew 1974).

Members seeking to retain their current office are incentivized to engage in acts that are visible to their constituents and allow members to claim credit for policies benefitting constituents. The most straightforward mechanism by which members can engage in these activities is through sponsoring legislation. Volden and Wiseman’s legislative effectiveness scores, therefore, reward members who sponsor legislation that progresses successfully through the legislative process, awarding higher scores to those bills that are of greater substantive significance in addition to those that make it farther through the legislative process. Furthermore, as members of Congress exert more influence over

¹ *TIME Magazine*, “The Congress: The Prelude of the 83rd,” January 12, 1953.

committees on which they sit — as opposed to those in which they do not hold a seat — members craft bills carefully to ensure they are referred to committees on which they are a member (Schiller 1995). And if, as Volden and Wiseman suggest, members of Congress seek to ensure the passage of their sponsored legislation, members will find it beneficial to serve on a committee that is considered effective.

Volden and Wiseman’s scores are helpful for evaluating what criteria make some legislators more effective than others at the individual member level, yet what I seek to address, however, is how this legislative effectiveness might be evaluated at the committee level.

As staff — and committee staff in particular — provide crucial institutional knowledge to members of Congress, I argue that their years of experience on Capitol Hill will prove to be consequential for how effective their bosses are. To capture levels of staff experience, I utilize publicly reported expenditure records from 1993 to 2020 to measure aggregate years of employment for a given committee’s staff and suggest that for any given committee, higher total years of staff experience will lead to a more effective committee. Those committees with lower levels of staff experience will be less legislatively effective, all else equal. Furthermore, I anticipate that the experience of senior staff will translate more directly to committee effectiveness than junior-staff experience. As senior staff — such as chiefs of staff, staff directors, and policy directors — are the key individuals taking direction from the chairman and steering the ship of committee staff, I expect that greater senior-staff experience will be strongly predictive of a committee’s legislative effectiveness. And due to the nature of committee chairmen being faced with fixed budgets with which to hire staff, if senior-staff experience is, in fact, positively correlated with committee effectiveness, I expect that effective committees will also have fewer experienced junior staff. If chairmen leading effective committees spend more of their budget to secure experienced senior staff, that will naturally result in a smaller portion of their budget remaining with which chairmen can hire experienced junior staff. When making hiring decisions, chairmen are faced with tradeoffs with respect to where they should allocate their funding. I argue that chairmen seeking to lead an effective committee should dedicate a larger portion of their budget to hiring experienced senior staff while foregoing experienced junior staff.

In the following section I outline the measure by which I test these theoretical expectations and assess committees' effectiveness, detailing the formula by which I assign committee effectiveness scores and address potential questions of validity.

CHAPTER 5

COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS SCORE

When assessing the impact that staff tenures have on a committee’s effectiveness, it is essential to define this measure of effectiveness. Borrowing from Volden and Wiseman’s (2014; 2018) legislative effectiveness scores (LES), I developed a metric by which each Senate committee can be evaluated for its legislative effectiveness in the 103rd Congress through the 116th Congress.¹ Volden and Wiseman’s 2014 and 2018 pieces quantify the relative effectiveness of individual members of the House of Representatives and the Senate, respectively. These novel measures provide me the framework by which to apply such a measure to committees, creating what I call a committee effectiveness score (CES).

Using Volden and Wiseman’s designation of legislation as commemorative, substantive, or substantive and significant, I was able to assign all legislation referred to any Senate committee between the 103rd and 116th Congress a significance value.² Combining these significance codes with data from the *Congressional Bills Project* (Adler and Wilkerson 2020) on each of these bill’s status, I sorted legislation by the committee to which the legislation was primarily referred (REF). I then added an identifier to each bill indicating if it was reported out of the committee to which it was primarily referred (REP), if it passed the Senate (PASS), and if it was ultimately signed into law (LAW).

In the same manner that Volden and Wiseman weigh their legislative effectiveness scores, I assign weights to each bill depending on its previously assigned substantive significance: commemorative (C), substantive (S), and substantive *and* significant (SS). Commemorative bills were weighed by a

¹It is important to note that while a not insignificant portion of Senate committee work consists of vetting and voting on executive nominations, this effectiveness score is limited to measuring legislative productivity and therefore excludes committee consideration of nominations. This definition of committee effectiveness scores leaves room for future work to include considerations of nominations and treaties.

²See Volden and Wiseman (2014) pp. 20–21 for a fulsome explanation of the coding strategies for these three classifications of legislative significance.

value of $\alpha = 1$, substantive bills by $\beta = 5$, and substantive and significant by $\gamma = 10$. The reported term, for example, is the number of bills reported out of committee i in Congress t , weighted by each of the bill's significance, divided by the total sum of bills reported out of all committees N in Congress t , weighted again by α , β , and γ .

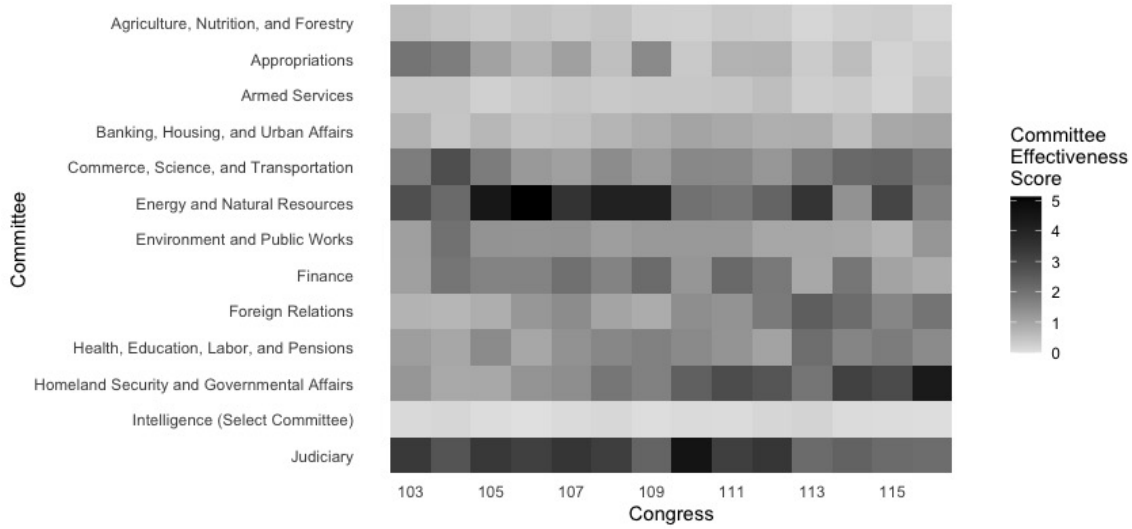
Lastly, I normalize each committee effectiveness score by multiplying each score by the total number of committees (20) and dividing the score by the number of progress checkpoints (4). This produces scores with a mean of one and minimum value of zero. The equation for deriving committee effectiveness scores is, therefore, as follows:

$$CES_{it} = \left[\begin{aligned} & \left(\frac{\alpha \text{REF}_{it}^C + \beta \text{REF}_{it}^S + \gamma \text{REF}_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N \text{REF}_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N \text{REF}_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N \text{REF}_{jt}^{SS}} \right) + \\ & \left(\frac{\alpha \text{REP}_{it}^C + \beta \text{REP}_{it}^S + \gamma \text{REP}_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N \text{REP}_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N \text{REP}_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N \text{REP}_{jt}^{SS}} \right) + \\ & \left(\frac{\alpha \text{PASS}_{it}^C + \beta \text{PASS}_{it}^S + \gamma \text{PASS}_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N \text{PASS}_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N \text{PASS}_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N \text{PASS}_{jt}^{SS}} \right) + \\ & \left(\frac{\alpha \text{LAW}_{it}^C + \beta \text{LAW}_{it}^S + \gamma \text{LAW}_{it}^{SS}}{\alpha \sum_{j=1}^N \text{LAW}_{jt}^C + \beta \sum_{j=1}^N \text{LAW}_{jt}^S + \gamma \sum_{j=1}^N \text{LAW}_{jt}^{SS}} \right) \end{aligned} \right] \frac{N}{4}$$

This committee effectiveness score can be applied easily to both House and Senate committees, but for the purposes of this project I limit the scope of my analysis to Senate committees to account for the relatively high turnover of members of Congress on House committees versus Senate committees. As the membership of Senate committees is far more stable than House committees (due to elections every six years rather than every two), I am able to better isolate the effect of staff turnover — rather than a changing membership — on committee effectiveness. After sorting and assigning all legislation to each of these significance categories and progress checkpoints, I am left with a unique committee effectiveness score for each of the 20 Senate committees in the 103rd Congress through the 116th Congress.

To control for varying baseline levels of legislative productivity and expected legislative action across committees I utilize the same tool the Senate employs to account for a committee's level of relative importance and expected legislative activity. Senate Rule XXV establishes three classes

Figure 5.1: Class A Committee Effectiveness Scores



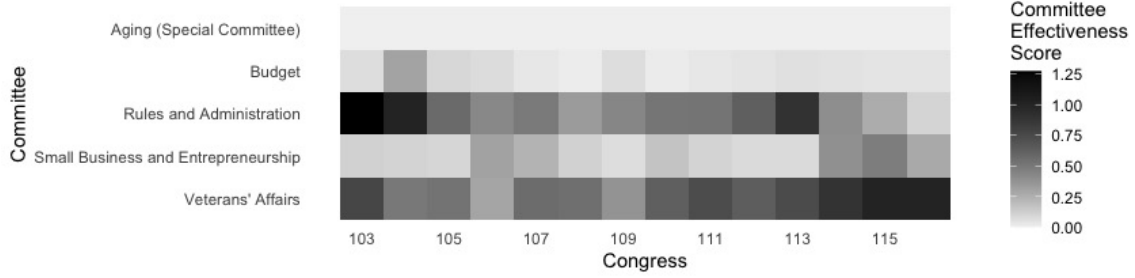
of committees (A, B, and C) and imposes restrictions on the number of committees on which a given Senator may serve within each class.³ Committees in the A class are deemed the most legislatively important, followed by B, concluding with C. This classification corresponds with each class' legislative output. In the 115th Congress, for example, Class-A committees were referred 90% of all bills introduced that Congress, and 83% of all bills signed into law were referred to a Class-A committee.⁴ In raw numbers, this means that Class-A committees were tasked with evaluating over 4,000 bills in the 115th Congress whereas Class B and C were collectively referred one tenth of that. Sorting each of the Senate's 20 committees by their classes allows for a more helpful evaluation of effectiveness, allowing for comparisons across committees of equal legislative importance and expected legislative workloads.

Figure 5.1 depicts the committee effectiveness scores for all committees in Class A. This class has the greatest amount of variation in committee effectiveness scores. It is clear, however, that very few committees' effectiveness scores remain relatively constant across time, indicating that the variance in effectiveness scores by group is not attributable just to differences across committees, but rather committee's effectiveness changing over time. The Class-A committee that achieved the lowest CES

³See Appendix B for a complete list of Senate committees and their classes, as assigned by Senate Rule XXV.

⁴Eight percent of all bills were referred to Class-B committees, and the final two percent were referred to Class-C committees. Thirteen percent of laws were referred to Class-B committees and four percent to Class-C committees.

Figure 5.2: Class B Committee Effectiveness Scores



in a given Congress is the 106th Congress' Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The Intelligence Committee received a score of 0, indicating that not only did they not pass any legislation, but they were not referred any legislation. The maximum score, however, was achieved in the same Congress by the Senate Energy and Natural Resource Committee. They received a score of 5.123, which is the highest CES across all three committee classes. In the 106th Congress the Energy and Natural Resources Committee was referred 411 bills — over a fourth of which were signed into law. The mean CES for Class-A committees is 1.367, which is also the highest across all committees.⁵

Class-B committees also exhibit substantial variation across time, yet in a much more limited range of scores. As is apparent in Figure 5.2, the lowest CES for Class B is 0, which was the CES for the Special Committee on Aging across all 14 Congress in this time period. Like the Intelligence Committee in the 103rd Congress, this consistent score of zero indicates that the Special Committee on Aging was not referred any legislation across these congresses. Class C's maximum CES, however, only reached 1.274, which was achieved by the Rules Committee in the 103rd Congress.

Lastly, Figure 5.3 depicts the committee effectiveness scores for Class C committees. Again, the minimum observed value is 0 (achieved by the Ethics Committee), and the maximum for this class was 1.111 (achieved by the Indian Affairs Committee). Class C's mean CES is the lowest of all three classes, with a value of 0.382. This is unsurprising as Class-C committees are generally not regarded as legislatively active.⁶

⁵See Appendix C for full summary statistics of the committee effectiveness scores.

⁶As is evident in Figures 5.2 and 5.3, the committee effectiveness scores for the Special Committee on Aging and the Select Committee on Ethics rarely deviate from zero. For this reason, I exclude both committees in my dataset for subsequent analyses. I demonstrate in models found in Appendix E, Tables E.2 and E.5, however, that including these two committees has no substantial effect on model results.

Figure 5.3: Class C Committee Effectiveness Scores

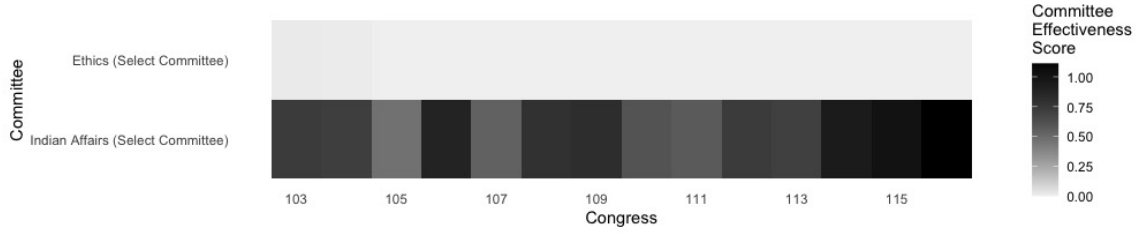
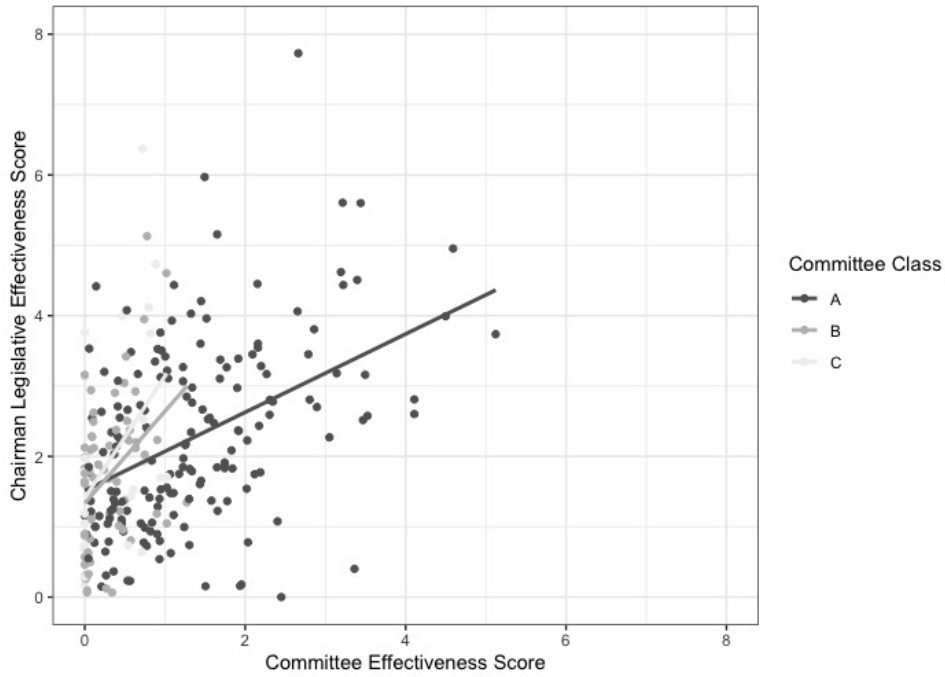


Figure 5.4: Correlation between Committee Effectiveness Score and Chair's Legislative Effectiveness Score



One might make the argument that a given committee's effectiveness score is highly correlated with its chair's legislative effectiveness score, yet I demonstrate in Figure 5.4 that this is not the case. The overall Pearson correlation coefficient across all three classes of committees is 0.4322, indicating a moderate level of correlation.⁷ It is clear the chair's legislative effectiveness score is not entirely predictive of her committee's effectiveness score, yet the correlation is high enough to warrant the inclusion of the chair's LES as a control variable in my subsequent models.

These committee effectiveness scores represent the first quantitative attempt to classify committees' productivity. Members' individual legislative effectiveness has been the focus of much attention

⁷The Pearson correlation coefficients for classes A, B, and C are 0.439, .393, and 0.431, respectively.

— with Volden and Wiseman’s (2014) legislative effectiveness scores serving as a preeminent breakthrough in quantifying this effectiveness — yet this new committee effectiveness score takes the first step at applying such a measure to committees. As mentioned previously, this model for obtaining Senate scores could be applied to the House of Representatives, allowing for methodological assessments of House committee effectiveness, as well.⁸ In the next section I will present my model of these Senate committee effectiveness scores as a function of multiple categorical variables, in addition to the key independent variable of interest, staff experience, to determine the effect of staff tenure on committee effectiveness.

⁸A scholar embarking on this journey should, however, be conscious of the potential impact of higher levels of member turnover in House committees as compared to Senate committees.

CHAPTER 6

METHODOLOGY

To demonstrate the impact of committee-staff tenure on committee legislative effectiveness I employ a unique dataset of staff experience to serve as the key independent variable, along with a number of control variables, in predicting my previously outlined committee effectiveness scores. Such control variables include a binary indication of whether or not a given committee had a new chairman or ranking member in a given Congress, the level of experience of senators on a given committee, and the chairman’s legislative effectiveness score. This section details my data-collection process and relevant dependent and independent variables.

6.1 Committee Membership

To obtain a complete record of Senate committee membership I used the publicly available membership records from Charles Stewart and Jonathan Woon (2017). These data include complete rosters for every Congress from the 103rd through the 115th Congress, in addition to records on committee turnover, seniority, and indications of new or returning chairmen. I updated this data to include membership and turnover records for the 116th Congress and added a unique committee-identification code to facilitate matching with staff data. I calculate senator experience by summing the number of congresses in which a senator currently serving on committee i in Congress t previously served on committee i , divided by the number of senators serving on committee i in Congress t . Similar to this calculation for senator experience, I obtained values for staff experience for all 20 committees in every Congress from the 103rd to the 116th.

6.2 Staff Tenure

Using a dataset purchased from LegiStorm, I was able to assess staff tenures for Senate committee staff. LegiStorm is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that has collected detailed biographical information on all congressional staff since 2011. LegiStorm’s records include complete staffing data (lacking biographical information) beginning in October, 2000, so I mapped this purchased data onto the full committee membership data from Stewart and Woon, creating a data set that spans

the 103rd Congress to the 116th Congress (1993–2020).¹ LegiStorm’s data is not without its flaws — namely the fact that it is a relatively new data set that lacks historical completeness — yet it represents the most comprehensive data set of congressional staff available for analyses such as this. Only a handful of recent studies have employed this data (Cain and Drutman 2014; McCrain 2018; Shepherd and You 2019; Ritchie and You Forthcoming), yet this new use of LegiStorm’s resources represents a significant advancement in the congressional-staffing literature.

This staff data required intensive organizing and cleaning, in which I isolated only those staff records for individuals employed by Senate committees in the time period of interest. This left me with a dataset of 5,759 unique staff members.

As committee staff are hired for their specific area of expertise, for the purposes of obtaining a given committee’s total years of staff experience I only consider years in which staff worked for that particular Senate committee — not a different committee, personal office, or the House of Representatives. I calculate staff experience, therefore, in the same fashion as senator experience: summing the number of congresses in which a staffer currently employed by committee i in Congress t previously worked for committee i , divided by the number of staff employed by committee i in Congress t . There are some instances in which experience on one committee might transfer to another (e.g., working on the Armed Services Committee might equip a staffer well to serve in a role on the Foreign Relations Committee), yet for the purposes of this analysis, I argue that direct committee experience equips staffers with the most impactful tools to be an effective staffer. While policy expertise might translate across groups of committees, years of experience working with relevant departmental bureaus and interacting with decades of legislative precedent are unique to each committee.² It is for this reason that I consider experienced committee staff to be only those

¹To address a potential consequence of lacking complete data from the beginning of my time period of interest I employ statistical models on both the entire span of my data and the limited span that includes only the period in which LegiStorm’s data is complete. I am able to demonstrate that the statistical findings from the 103rd Congress to the 116th Congress match those of the 107th to the 116th. See Appendix E Table E.3 for these results.

²One could make the argument that a staffer with experience working on a House committee who made the jump across Capitol Hill to the committee’s Senate counterpart should be considered experienced, yet I maintain that these individuals should not be considered experienced for the purposes of this study as they are unfamiliar with the intricacies of the new committee. A staffer moving from the House to the Senate would be unfamiliar with its nominations process, and a staffer moving from either chamber to the other would be unacquainted with its legislative counsel, responsible for drafting legislation; its committee’s members, whose support is integral in the committee’s legislative success; and, perhaps most importantly, its chamber’s procedural differences. I do not dispute that these staff members, moving from a committee in one chamber to its counterpart in the other, have a unique

staffers who have previously worked on the committee by which they are currently employed. The average years of staff experience for a Senate committee in a given Congress is 4.58, with Senate Armed Services Committee in the 113th Congress achieving the highest level of staff experience, with 8.73 average years of experience.

6.3 Staff Seniority

Furthermore, to assess the impact of different levels of staff responsibility on committee effectiveness I added a binary indicator for whether or not each staff member served as a senior or junior staffer in a given Congress. To accurately designate staff as junior or senior I employed a strategy consistent with Melinda Ritchie and Hye Young You's assessment of the seniority of personal-office staff in the House of Representatives (Forthcoming). Like Ritchie and You, I consulted Congressional Research Service and Congressional Institute descriptions of staff responsibilities to classify staff as junior or senior staff. Out of 12 generally accepted committee staff positions, I designated six as senior staff: staff director, deputy staff director, policy director, general counsel, communications director, and parliamentarian/clerk.³ I corroborated this designation by consulting six current or former committee staff and having them individually assign levels of seniority to these 12 staff positions. There was unanimous agreement on that four of these six positions should be considered senior, and the final two I assigned to the senior-staff category (parliamentarian/clerk and policy director) were included by a majority of these six staffers. As the specific titles assigned to individual staffers vary substantially across committees and Congresses, I then hand-coded all unique staff titles found in my data to determine whether they fall into these six senior-staff positions or should be considered junior staff.⁴ With this designation, just over 15% of all committee staff are considered to be senior staff.

level of experience that those staffers who are beginning their careers on Capitol Hill lack, yet I maintain that specific-committee experience is both unique to and greater than cross-chamber experience. Future studies could expand the scope of this project to assess the effect of this cross-chamber experience on committee productivity.

³The remaining six positions I consider to be junior staff are counsel, professional staff member, policy analyst, director of operations, press secretary/assistant, and staff assistant.

⁴See Appendix D for a list of titles I considered to be "senior staff."

I then calculated both the committee’s average senior-staff experience and junior-staff experience.⁵ I anticipate that those staff members who are the primary individuals responsible for communicating the chairman’s preferred policies and political strategies to the rest of the staff will have a greater impact on the committee’s overall effectiveness than those serving in more administrative roles. I argue that this distinction in experience levels between junior and senior staff has substantial consequences as a junior staffer who lacks experience has the opportunity to be mentored by experienced senior staff, yet an inexperienced staffer at the helm of a committee will likely lead to junior staffers lacking direction resulting in an entirely ineffective committee. Junior staff are necessary for the functioning of a successful committee, yet their roles are not of the same highly specialized nature as those of senior staff. Junior staff fill a crucial need on any committee, yet they are more easily replaced than a staff director or general counsel who possess the key institutional knowledge of Capitol Hill and their committee’s legislative history.

The average years of senior-staff experience is only slightly higher than general staff experience at 5.59 years, yet the committee with the highest level of senior-staff experience is the Senate Appropriations Committee in the 115th Congress at 12.19 years. Junior staff, on the other hand, have a mean experience level of 4.14 years. The Armed Services Committee in the 113th Congress, again, had the highest level junior-staff experience with 8.46 years of experience.

Across the 14 congresses included in my dataset, the Senate Small Business and Entrepreneurship Committee had both the lowest general staff experience and the lowest junior staff experience levels, with 3.40 and 3.00 years, respectively. The Rules Committee had the lowest levels of senior staff experience across the 103rd to 116th congresses at 4.42 average years.⁶ Consistent with the individual-Congress scores, the Armed Services Committee had the highest overall staff experience, averaging 6.26 years, and highest junior staff experience, averaging 6.06 years. The Appropriations Committee had the highest average senior-staff experience across the time period of my analysis, with an average of 8.27 years of senior-staff experience.

⁵I calculated senior staff years of experience by summing all the years of experience a staffer had on the committee in which they now serve as a senior staff member.

⁶The average senior-staff experience level for the Ethics Committee is 0.36 years lower than the Rules Committee, yet due to the lack of complete data on senior staff for both the Ethics Committee and Select Committee on Aging these two committees are excluded from all analyses.

CHAPTER 7

RESULTS

Existing knowledge about legislative effectiveness is member-centric, and only recently has it been assessed as a function of staff expertise. The following models move the collective knowledge forward to answer the key question of interest from a committee-centric view: how does a given committee’s level of staff experience affect its legislative effectiveness? The data presented in this section allow for a positive conclusion, indicating that committee staff do, in fact, affect committee effectiveness. I show, further, that the specific type of staff matters when assessing committee effectiveness, and that this holds true across all classes of Senate committees.

Consistent with my expectations, Table 7.1 presents two models demonstrating a strong relationship between committee staff experience and committee legislative effectiveness. Both models — ordinary least squares regressions — allow me to assess committee effectiveness scores from 18 Senate committees from the 103rd Congress to the 115th Congress.¹

The first model considers all staff experience as a predictor of the dependent variable — committee effectiveness scores. In this model, it is clear that the relationship between staff experience and committee effectiveness is significant, yet the model indicates that there is a negative relationship between levels of staff experience and committee effectiveness (see Figure 7.1). As the average level of experience of a committee’s staff increases by one Congress (two years), a committee’s effectiveness decreases by nearly 0.3 points. In the 114th Congress, a difference of 0.3 points in committee effectiveness scores was equivalent to the difference between the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee and the Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee.

¹As mentioned previously, I do not assess committee effectiveness scores from all 20 committees due to a lack of variation in committee effectiveness scores and a lack of data on senior staff serving on the Ethics Committee and Select Committee on Aging. Additionally, to test the accuracy of my findings, I ran an identical model including only the staff data from LegiStorm’s complete records — the 107th Congress through the 115th Congress — and found results consistent with my model that includes the full span of staff data. See Appendix E Table E.3 for these findings. Lastly, my results omit data from the 116th Congress as chairmen’s legislative effectiveness scores are not yet available for the 116th Congress. Identical models to those found in Table 7.1 yet omitting the chair’s LES, thereby allowing me to include data from the 116th Congress, can be found in Appendix E Table E.1.

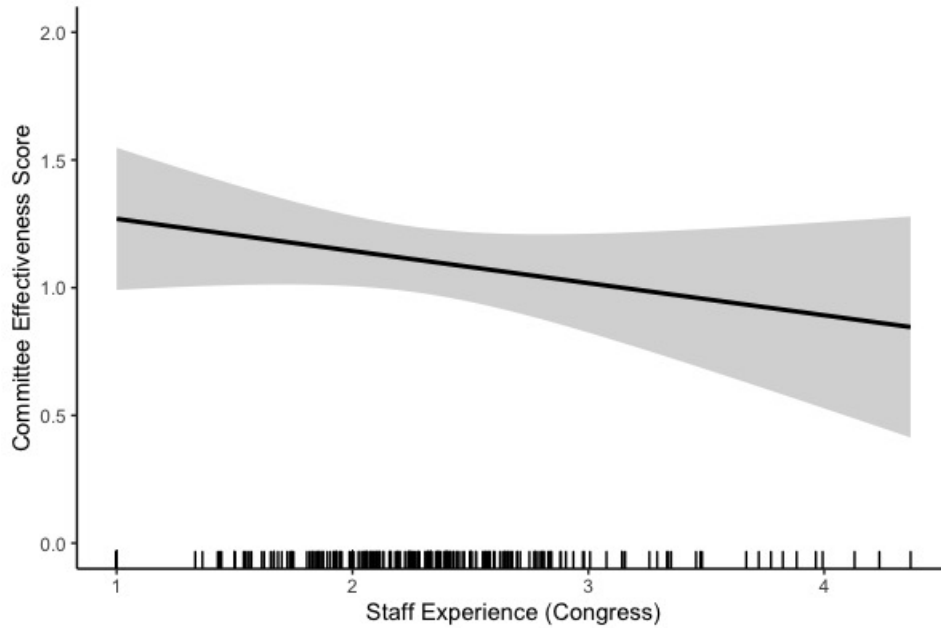
Table 7.1: Explaining committee effectiveness, controlling for committee chairs' legislative effectiveness scores

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Committee Effectiveness Score	
	(1)	(2)
Staff experience (Congress)	-0.298*** (0.109)	
Junior staff experience (Congress)		-0.762*** (0.113)
Senior staff experience (Congress)		0.299*** (0.068)
Senator experience (Congress)	0.120** (0.056)	0.064 (0.055)
New chair	-0.151 (0.119)	-0.159 (0.110)
New ranking member	0.127 (0.118)	0.184* (0.109)
Chair's LES	0.259*** (0.042)	0.208*** (0.041)
Class-B committee	-0.949*** (0.137)	-0.961*** (0.129)
Class-C committee	-0.868*** (0.243)	-0.867*** (0.250)
Constant	1.075*** (0.251)	1.442*** (0.242)
Observations	234	231
R ²	0.342	0.442
Adjusted R ²	0.322	0.422
Residual Std. Error	0.819 (df = 226)	0.759 (df = 222)
F Statistic	16.791*** (df = 7; 226)	22.016*** (df = 8; 222)

Note: Ordinary least squares estimation with standard errors in parentheses. Excluding the Ethics Committee and Select Committee on Aging due to a lack of data on senior staff. Includes data from the 103rd Congress to the 115th, as legislative effectiveness scores for the 116th Congress are not yet available.

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

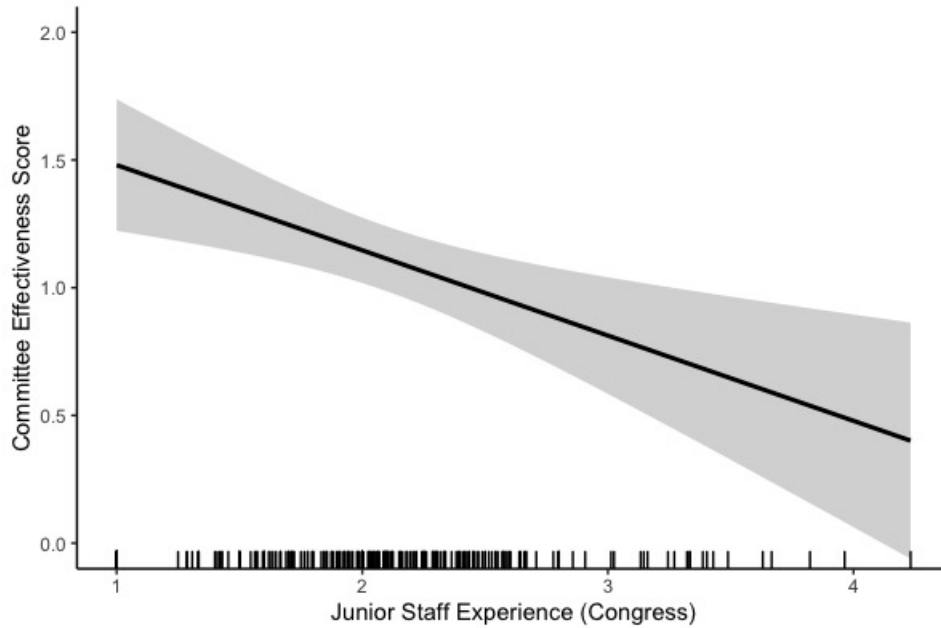
Figure 7.1: Total staff experience and committee effectiveness



The ENR Committee was referred approximately 80% of the legislation the HELP Committee was referred, yet only managed to have six bills pass the Senate and be signed into law. The HELP Committee, on the other hand, had 26 bills in its jurisdiction pass the Senate, 10 of which were signed into law — all substantive in nature but one, which was both substantive and significant. And consistent with my findings, the HELP Committee had a lower average experience level than the ENR committee, which scored lower in committee effectiveness, indicating a negative relationship between staff experience and committee effectiveness. As this result produced an outcome contrary to my theoretical expectations, however, I reclassified the staff variable separating out junior staff from senior staff.

Using these new variables, I ran a second model testing the impact of specific levels of staff experience on committee effectiveness. Because chairmen are faced with a fixed budget when hiring staff, they must make tradeoffs in determining where to allocate their funding. When chairmen allocate more of their budget to retaining experienced senior staff they must sacrifice the retention of experienced junior staff. This second model in Table 7.1 provides statistically significant results consistent with my theoretical expectations: a chair who prioritizes experienced senior staff will see that decision reflected positively in her committee effectiveness, whereas a chairman who chooses to

Figure 7.2: Junior-staff experience and committee effectiveness



retain higher levels of junior staff will achieve lower levels of committee effectiveness. In this model, junior staff experience is predictive of a decrease in committee effectiveness, indicating that for every one unit increase in junior-staff experience (equivalent to one Congress) a committee's effectiveness score decreases by 0.762 points.

Figure 7.2 further emphasizes this result. As junior-staff experience increases from one Congress (the minimum amount of experience a committee can have at the end of the period in which effectiveness is evaluated) to a high of 4.232 Congresses (8.464 years), it is evident that committee effectiveness decreases. In practical terms, this result suggests that chairmen seeking to improve their committees' legislative productivity should not invest their staffing funds in experienced junior staff as they will decrease that committee's effectiveness.

When Senator Robert Byrd (D-W.Va.) took the helm of the Senate Appropriations Committee in the 110th Congress at the age of 89, the committee saw a decline in its effectiveness score by over an entire point, earning the Appropriations Committee the ranking of the third least effective class-A committee in that Congress. Byrd's tenure as chairman of the Appropriations Committee was a point of great concern, prompting multiple Senate Democrats to quietly mull whether or not

he was capable of continuing to serve in this position.² My data only highlight this ineffectiveness, yet indicate that had he made more strategic choices about which staff to retain, his committee's effectiveness would have seen vast improvements.

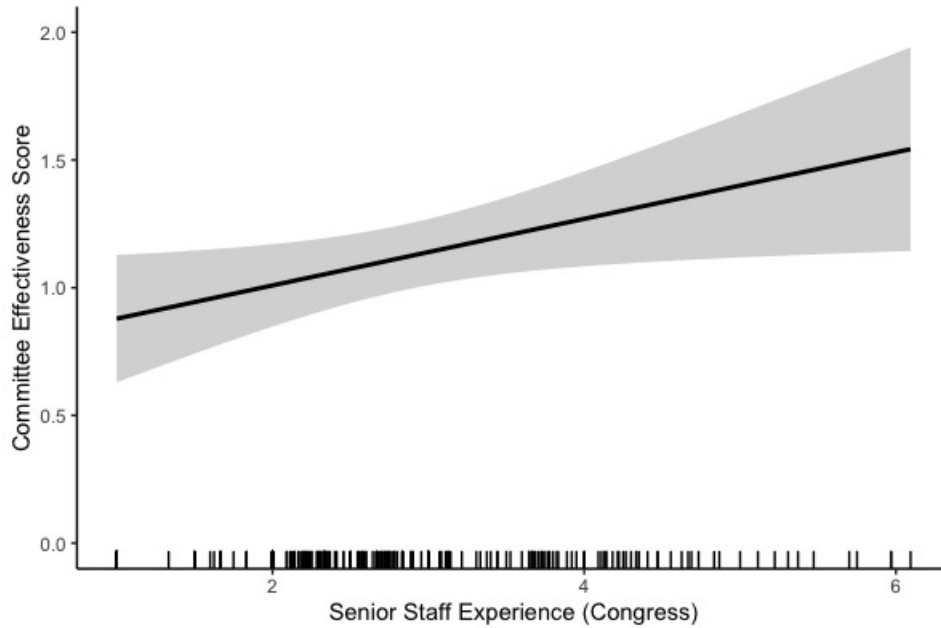
As he made the transition from ranking member to chairman, Byrd retained a significant portion of his staff and actually increased the overall experience level of his committee. He made two key errors, however. The first being that he did not retain his previous staff director who had accumulated 8 years of experience as a senior-staff member, and instead appointed a new staff director who had no experience working for the Senate Appropriations committee. He did, however, retain enough senior staff to result in a net increase in senior-staff experience from the 109th Congress to the 110th Congress. Byrd's second blunder, however — the choice to retain a large share of the junior staff on the Appropriations committee — demonstrates clearly the effect of junior-staff experience on overall committee effectiveness. The net increase in junior-staff experience on the Appropriations Committee from the 109th to the 110th Congress is the second largest increase in junior-staff experience for the Appropriations Committee over the scope of my study. As is evident in the second model in Table 7.1, an increase in junior staff experience results in a decrease of overall committee effectiveness, explaining at least part of Senator Byrd's lack of effectiveness as chair in the 110th Congress.

It is clear from Table 7.1, and highlighted by the 110th Congress' Appropriations Committee, that an increase in junior-staff experience has a negative effect on a committee's effectiveness score, yet senior staff, however, have an opposite effect on committee effectiveness. As is apparent in Figure 7.3, for every one-unit increase in senior staff experience, a committee's effectiveness score increases by 0.299 points. This finding is in line with my theoretical expectation, that those senior employees leading the rest of the staff will have a greater positive impact on committee effectiveness than junior staff.

Senator John Thune (R-S.D.)'s tenure as chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation illustrates the impact that an experienced senior staff can have on a committee's effectiveness, especially when coupled with less experienced junior staff. Senator Thune was appointed chair of the Commerce Committee in the 114th Congress, following a two-year stint as ranking member during the 113th Congress. When he took over as chair, he retained

²John Bresnahan, "Dems mull ousting Byrd as chairman," *Politico*, December 18, 2007. <https://www.politico.com/story/2007/12/dems-mull-ousting-byrd-as-chairman-007446>.

Figure 7.3: Senior-staff experience and committee effectiveness



nearly 80% of his senior staff, including his staff director, deputy staff director — who later became his staff director, and his general counsel — who later became his deputy staff director. Senator Thune identified those influential staff members with whom he worked as ranking member and was able to capitalize on their years of experience when he transitioned to chairman. Senator Thune’s prioritization of these key senior staff members likely consumed a sizeable portion of his hiring budget, forcing him to hire less experienced junior staff. The Commerce Committee’s overall level of experience declined in the 114th Congress due to Senator Thune’s hiring of inexperienced junior staff, but as both models in Table 7.1 illustrate, a decline in overall staff experience — especially when coupled with an increase in senior-staff experience and a decrease in junior-staff experience — increases a committee’s effectiveness score.

Furthermore, in the 115th Congress, as Senator Thune was beginning his second term as chairman of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee, he continued to retain those staffers he first held over in the 114th Congress. In both the 114th and 115th Congresses, the Commerce Committee was the third-most effective Class-A committee. Senator Thune’s strategic hiring in the 114th Congress — prioritizing those influential senior staffers with years of experience over retaining junior staff — combined with his ability to retain those same staffers into his second term

as chairman allowed his committee to achieve two effectiveness scores in the top 15% of all committee effectiveness scores in the 103rd through the 116th Congress.

Lastly, in both models, the chairman's legislative effectiveness score, as calculated by Volden and Wiseman, is a significant predictor of his committee's legislative effectiveness score. In other words, as the chairman becomes more effective, so does his committee. The chairmen who lead the most effective committees, however, are not only those who are individually effective legislators, but those who make strategic hiring decisions. Namely, those who use their budget to hire experienced senior staff while spending less funding on their junior staff.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

As the committee gavel is passed from chairman to chairman, each Senator approaches the job with a certain set of goals and legislative priorities. Yet as new chairs are getting settled in the center of the dais, they are faced with the fact that a new chairmanship typically leads to lower levels of committee legislative effectiveness in that given Congress. If a chair were to act strategically, however, she would take stock of the experience of existing committee staff and retain those with more experience.

The instances in which the most amount of committee staff turnover occurs is at the beginning of a term for a new chairman or ranking member as this new leader capitalizes on the opportunity to hire new staff loyal to him or her. If this chair or ranking member, however, prioritizes legislative effectiveness, she would be wise to consider retaining existing staff with years of experience on that committee rather than hiring an entirely new team. The new chair should be especially aware of hiring senior staff with years of experience, as she could offset much of the decrease in committee productivity that comes with a new chairman by keeping some of the institutional knowledge of the staff. Of course, it is entirely within a chairman's rights to retain only those staff she feels are truly loyal to her and replace all others with staff new to the committee, but my findings suggest that as senators rise in the seniority ranks of the committees on which they serve, they should work more closely with committee staff so as to establish a relationship with experienced staff they could retain upon taking the gavel.

When considering factors that make one member of Congress more effective than another, scholars tend to focus on individual characteristics, such as a member's experience, seniority, and a number of personal demographics. Only recently have scholars considered the effect of congressional staff on a member's personal legislative effectiveness (Crosson et al. 2018). This research, however, extends existing scholarship to address the consequences of staff experience on *committee* legislative effectiveness. To increase Senate committee productivity and avoid the legislative bottleneck that

often comes at the committee stage of the legislative process, committee chairs should hire and retain more experienced staff.

In this paper I find evidence to confirm Romzek and Utter's claim that staff provide "a thread of continuity, institutional memory, and expertise within the institution" (Romzek and Utter 1997, 1252). There are few constants on Capitol Hill following an election, yet those in positions to make hiring decisions regarding committee staff should seek to place a greater emphasis on continuity of the staff, preserving this source of institutional knowledge, thereby improving committee legislative effectiveness.

APPENDIX A

SIZE OF SENATE COMMITTEES' STAFF

Committee	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116
Appropriations	20	27	40	51	68	86	108	111	112	122	152	153	149	134
Agriculture	2	6	10	10	18	22	28	29	58	75	64	52	56	50
Armed Services	10	16	17	21	38	42	45	55	61	69	70	76	77	59
Banking	4	11	14	15	31	29	32	40	71	82	94	70	69	56
Budget	8	15	19	24	33	41	51	54	62	101	98	73	68	57
Commerce	10	13	21	25	35	44	54	57	92	104	109	104	104	110
EPW	5	9	10	14	26	28	31	42	52	69	91	74	77	74
ENR	5	9	10	16	30	37	39	54	71	83	84	73	84	63
Ethics	0	2	3	3	3	4	5	11	14	23	19	21	29	21
Finance	4	7	15	22	45	60	81	95	128	166	170	134	134	125
Foreign Relations	7	10	15	18	31	48	48	65	86	115	126	103	94	97
HSGAC	8	11	24	25	37	54	77	96	144	186	217	200	177	147
HELP	15	19	21	32	56	62	77	91	133	146	146	142	136	125
Indian Affairs	1	1	3	5	5	7	18	19	25	39	44	35	37	25
Intelligence	8	7	8	11	15	20	30	44	47	56	54	55	53	47
Judiciary	7	13	20	28	65	75	101	114	165	207	229	189	252	155
Rules	3	4	4	4	6	7	10	20	24	33	36	32	49	30
Small Business	3	2	3	8	16	16	24	30	48	55	53	57	52	46
Aging	3	4	3	8	20	18	29	28	41	39	52	53	43	33
Veterans' Affairs	3	3	3	3	5	11	12	22	28	42	41	40	43	47
Total	126	189	263	343	583	711	900	1077	1462	1812	1949	1736	1783	1501

Note: Staff sizes in congresses 103 through 106 are undercounting true employment levels as LegiStorm's complete data begins with the 107th Congress.

APPENDIX B
LIST OF SENATE COMMITTEES BY CLASS

As established by Senate Rule XXV:

A Committees

Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry
Appropriations
Armed Services
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Energy and Natural Resources (ENR)
Environment and Public Works (EPW)
Finance
Foreign Relations
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP)
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (HS-GAC)
Judiciary
Select Intelligence

B Committees

Budget
Rules and Administration
Small Business and Entrepreneurship
Veterans' Affairs
Special Aging
Joint Economic Committee

C Committees

Select Ethics
Indian Affairs

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY STATISTICS

Table C.1: Summary Statistics

	Description	Min	Mean	Max	Std. Dev.
CES		0.000	1.004	5.123	1.001
Class A	Committee Effectiveness Score	0.000	1.367	5.123	1.045
Class B		0.000	0.296	1.274	0.323
Class C		0.000	0.382	1.111	0.408
Staff experience		1.000	2.552	5.433	0.835
Class A	Sum of total congresses staff have served on committee i , divided by committee staff working on committee i in Congress t	1.000	2.652	5.433	0.902
Class B		1.000	2.328	3.640	0.652
Class C		1.000	2.447	3.714	0.663
Junior staff exp.		1.000	2.087	4.182	0.620
Class A	Same calculation as staff experience, but including only junior staff	1.000	2.185	4.182	0.643
Class B		1.000	1.816	2.811	0.477
Class C		1.000	2.124	3.000	0.590
Senior staff exp. (all)		1.000	2.878	6.094	1.119
Class A	Same calculation as staff experience, but including only senior staff	1.000	3.048	6.094	1.207
Class B		1.000	2.623	5.000	0.879
Class C		1.000	2.290	3.250	0.596
Senior staff exp. (maj.)		1.000	2.914	7.250	1.263
Class A	Same calculation as senior staff experience, but including only those working for the majority	1.000	3.032	7.250	1.340
Class B		1.000	2.767	5.000	1.002
Class C		1.000	1.970	3.500	0.687
Senior staff exp. (min.)		1.000	3.162	7.818	1.433
Class A	Same calculation as senior staff experience, but including only those working for the minority	1.000	3.272	7.818	1.458
Class B		1.000	2.764	6.333	1.342
Class C		2.000	3.577	6.000	1.205
Senator experience		1.000	3.497	6.143	1.246
Class A	Sum of total congresses senators have served on committee i , divided by number of senators serving on committee i in Congress t	1.000	3.501	6.100	1.259
Class B		1.000	3.534	6.143	1.186
Class C		1.000	3.380	5.214	1.338
New chairman		0.000	0.585	1.000	0.494
Class A	0 if chairman is returning, 1 if new	0.000	0.543	1.000	0.499
Class B		0.000	0.643	1.000	0.483
Class C		0.000	0.714	1.000	0.460
New ranking member		0.000	0.571	1.000	0.496
Class A	0 if ranking member is returning, 1 if new	0.000	0.538	1.000	0.500
Class B		0.000	0.614	1.000	0.490
Class C		0.000	0.679	1.000	0.476

APPENDIX D
LIST OF SENIOR-STAFF TITLES

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. acting staff director/deputy general counsel | 20. counsel/policy director |
| 2. acting staff director/deputy general counsel | 21. democratic staff director |
| 3. administrative director/policy director | 22. deputy chief of staff |
| 4. assistant staff director/communications director | 23. deputy staff director |
| 5. chief clerk | 24. general counsel |
| 6. chief counsel | 25. homeland security affairs director, republican |
| 7. chief counsel and staff director | 26. homeland security policy director, republican |
| 8. chief counsel, democratic | 27. parliamentarian |
| 9. chief counsel, minority | 28. policy director |
| 10. chief counsel, republican | 29. senior adviser/communications director |
| 11. chief of staff | 30. senior communications director/speechwriter |
| 12. clerk | 31. senior policy director |
| 13. communications director | 32. staff director |
| 14. communications director, democratic | 33. staff director and chief counsel |
| 15. communications director, republican | 34. staff director, acting |
| 16. communications director/policy adviser | 35. staff director, democratic |
| 17. communications director/policy director | 36. staff director, interim |
| 18. communications director, republican, then professional staff member | 37. staff director, majority |
| 19. communications director/senior adviser | 38. staff director, minority |
| | 39. staff director, rep |

APPENDIX E

ROBUSTNESS OF MODELS

Table E.1: Explaining committee effectiveness on full range of data

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Committee Effectiveness Score	
	(1)	(2)
Staff experience (Congress)	−0.375*** (0.111)	
Junior staff experience (Congress)		−0.869*** (0.109)
Senior staff experience (Congress)		0.343*** (0.068)
Senator experience (Congress)	0.107* (0.057)	0.036 (0.056)
New chair	−0.208* (0.122)	−0.198* (0.111)
New ranking member	0.214* (0.121)	0.226** (0.110)
Class-B committee	−1.109*** (0.141)	−1.102*** (0.131)
Class-C committee	−0.746*** (0.252)	−0.755*** (0.253)
Constant	1.882*** (0.232)	2.124*** (0.213)
Observations	252	249
R ²	0.231	0.367
Adjusted R ²	0.213	0.349
Residual Std. Error	0.885 (df = 245)	0.808 (df = 241)
F Statistic	12.294*** (df = 6; 245)	19.989*** (df = 7; 241)

Note: Ordinary least squares estimation, standard errors in parentheses. Excluding the Ethics Committee and Select Committee on Aging due to a lack of data on senior staff. Model excludes the independent variable of the committee chair’s LES, allowing an analysis on the full range of data, from 103rd to 116th Congress. The primary difference between the model presented in the body of the paper and the model presented here is the significance of the binary indicators for new chairman and new ranking member are statistically significant at the $p < 0.1$ level. The negative relationship between new chairman and committee effectiveness is as expected, as newly installed committee chairs are rarely able to continue levels of productivity as seen under the previous, more experienced chair. This result further emphasizes the fact that new chairmen seeking to offset the decreased committee effectiveness inherent under a new chairman should especially prioritize hiring senior staff with years of experience working for his same committee. Senator Thune was especially adept at this hiring strategy in his time chairing the Senate Commerce Committee.

* $p < .1$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .01$

Table E.2: Explaining committee effectiveness, including data from the Ethics and Aging Committees

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Committee Effectiveness Score	
	(1)	(2)
Staff experience (Congress)	−0.287*** (0.096)	
Junior staff experience (Congress)		−0.640** (0.099)
Senior staff experience (Congress)		0.251*** (0.064)
Senator experience (Congress)	0.114** (0.050)	0.056 (0.052)
New chair	−0.119 (0.109)	−0.134 (0.104)
New ranking member	0.114 (0.108)	0.168 (0.104)
Chair's LES	0.254*** (0.039)	0.212*** (0.039)
Class-B committee	−1.018*** (0.121)	−1.063*** (0.118)
Class-C committee	−0.944*** (0.167)	−0.720*** (0.190)
Constant	1.072*** (0.229)	1.333*** (0.230)
Observations	260	252
R ²	0.403	0.468
Adjusted R ²	0.386	0.451
Residual Std. Error	0.784 (df = 252)	0.744 (df = 243)
F Statistic	24.273*** (df = 7; 252)	26.764*** (df = 8; 243)

Note: Ordinary least squares estimation, standard errors in parentheses. Including the Ethics Committee and Select Committee on Aging. Model includes the independent variable of the committee chair's LES, limiting the range of data to exclude the 115th Congress.

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table E.3: Explaining committee effectiveness, excluding data from 103rd – 106th Congresses

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Committee Effectiveness Score	
	(1)	(2)
Staff experience (Congress)	−0.393*** (0.125)	
Junior staff experience (Congress)		−0.836*** (0.120)
Senior staff experience (Congress)		0.288*** (0.068)
Senator experience (Congress)	0.056 (0.081)	−0.002 (0.073)
New chair	−0.081 (0.143)	−0.118 (0.128)
New ranking member	0.077 (0.138)	0.140 (0.124)
Chair’s LES	0.267*** (0.051)	0.207*** (0.047)
Class-B committee	−0.988*** (0.162)	−0.975*** (0.146)
Class-C committee	−0.732** (0.283)	−0.683*** (0.257)
Constant	1.561*** (0.499)	1.923*** (0.451)
Observations	162	162
R ²	0.392	0.514
Adjusted R ²	0.364	0.489
Residual Std. Error	0.780 (df = 154)	0.699 (df = 153)
F Statistic	14.162*** (df = 7; 154)	20.243*** (df = 8; 153)

Note: Ordinary least squares estimation, standard errors in parentheses. Excluding the Ethics Committee and Select Committee on Aging due to a lack of data on senior staff. Data from 107th to 115th Congress to indicate robustness of results on complete set of LegiStorm staff data as compared to including LegiStorm’s partially complete data from the 103rd to 106th Congress.

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table E.4: Explaining committee effectiveness with multilevel modeling

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Committee Effectiveness Score	
	(1)	(2)
Staff experience (Congress)	−0.288*** (0.109)	
Junior staff experience (Congress)		−0.755*** (0.113)
Senior staff experience (Congress)		0.302*** (0.068)
Senator experience (Congress)	0.116** (0.056)	0.059 (0.055)
New chair	−0.155 (0.119)	−0.162 (0.110)
New ranking member	0.126 (0.118)	0.183* (0.109)
Chair's LES	0.260*** (0.042)	0.209*** (0.041)
Constant	0.482 (0.393)	0.846** (0.390)
Committee Class Standard Deviation	0.275	0.279
Observations	234	231
Log Likelihood	−295.455	−275.840
Akaike Inf. Crit.	606.910	569.680
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	634.552	600.662

Note: Multilevel linear model, with random intercepts by committee class. Standard Errors in parentheses. Excluding observations for the Special Committees on Aging and Select Committee on Ethics. Data from 103rd to 115th Congress.

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

Table E.5: Explaining committee effectiveness with multilevel modeling, including data from the Ethics and Aging Committees

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	Committee Effectiveness Score	
	(1)	(2)
Staff experience (Congress)	−0.283*** (0.096)	
Junior staff experience (Congress)		−0.636*** (0.098)
Senior staff experience (Congress)		0.253*** (0.063)
Senator experience (Congress)	0.113** (0.050)	0.053 (0.052)
New chair	−0.121 (0.109)	−0.135 (0.104)
New ranking member	0.112 (0.108)	0.166 (0.104)
Chair's LES	0.255*** (0.039)	0.213*** (0.039)
Constant	0.420 (0.394)	0.739* (0.388)
Committee Class Standard Deviation	0.319	0.295
Observations	260	252
Log Likelihood	−316.965	−295.899
Akaike Inf. Crit.	649.930	609.798
Bayesian Inf. Crit.	678.415	641.563

Note: Multilevel linear model, with random intercepts by committee class. Standard Errors in parentheses. Including observations for the Special Committees on Aging and Select Committee on Ethics. Data from 103rd to 115th Congress.

*p < .1; **p < .05; ***p < .01

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